

Animal Science

Editorial

The dog days of late July and early August, linked as they are in the northern hemisphere to the end of the undergraduate teaching year provide opportunity for those of us involved in university teaching to take stock of where we are in terms of courses, their development and their evaluation. Such seasonality is not quite so evident in editorial activities although there are blips in submission rates of manuscripts that reflect critical times in terms of grant completions and so on. Whatever the reasons we have time in these dog days to reflect on our activities. Among my recurrent thoughts as a journal editor at this time are the most recent 'performance' figures for Animal Science as demonstrated in the ISI journal citation reports and also perhaps the most exciting development in scientific publishing for many years, the advent of 'open access' to scientific papers.

Members of the British Society of Animal Science will have read in a recent e-mail of the Society's first steps in the direction of open access. The implications associated with open access are many. They will all have effects on scientific publishing and the financial implications will affect the future activities of all scientific societies. We are all aware of the frustration that arises when we are unable to access papers and information 'when we want' and we can imagine how much worse this becomes for people working in institutions with inadequate library funding. Open access seeks to remove this impediment by turning upside down the traditional approaches to the funding of paper publication. The idea is that papers continue to be peer reviewed but are available on the internet free of charge and free of most copyright restrictions. Authors receive the same acknowledgements and citations as at present.

A number of other approaches are currently being evaluated. Some journals allow early access to a few articles, others allow full access at varying times following publication, and some journals allow access to papers during the refereeing and editorial process. Some journals and increasing numbers of institutions are depositing papers in digital repositories.

Much of the movement for open access is driven politically. A recent article in Wellcome News (Issue 42 April 2005) lists a calendar of recent events in this field. This includes a decision by governments in Finland, Norway and Denmark to pay for the open access publication of research. In the UK, a House of Commons report recommends that the government should support publication in author pays open access journals. The report also recommended funding for UK universities to establish repositories. The UK government has said that it sees no reason to intervene; the JISC committee is funding five journals to help them move to open access. There is indeed much to muse and act on in this debate.

Accessibility of papers published in any journal will naturally determine the impact factor for that journal. The rôle of a multifaceted journal compared with a specialized journal is difficult and can have marked effects on the impact factor. The impact factor can be described as an index of the citation of articles published in 2 years to the number of articles published by the journal in the same 2 years. It is commonly taken as an index of the scientific success of a journal. In the last 5 years it has ranged between 1.082 and 0.941. This ranks it somewhere in the middle/lower range of the first 20 journals in the agriculture, dairy and animal science group. (Top scoring journals hover in the range 2.0 to 2.5.) If we are seen as general in nature then our home base for readers is small and our impact factor is reduced. If we are truly international in nature then we must implement methods of increasing our reader base and citations. This must be achieved in terms of numbers of papers published as well as in the quality of the research published. We all need to work at this! There are editorial standards to maintain and improve upon, but more than anything else, we need material of worldwide research stature to publish. We want to be the acknowledged lead publication in animal science. Our handling systems continue to improve but it is you the contributors and readers who hold the key to improving the impact factor!

Ian J. Lean
Chairman of editors

Sources

Institute for Scientific Information. *Journal citation reports.* Web of Knowledge.

Joint Information Systems Committee. Website www.jisc.ac.uk

Newton, G. 2005. Read all about it. *Wellcome News* Issue 42, pp. 10-11.

